



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 April to 30 June 2013

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past three months, from 1 April to 30 June 2013, pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended by subsequent resolutions, most recently through resolution 2084 (2012).

II. Situation in the area and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was generally maintained, albeit in an increasingly volatile environment attributable to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Violations of the ceasefire by both sides are set out below. The Syrian Arab armed forces continued to deploy personnel and equipment inside the area of separation and carried out military activities and security operations against armed members of the opposition in the UNDOF area of operation. Inside the area of separation, the presence of the Syrian armed forces and unauthorized military equipment is in violation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israeli and Syrian forces.

3. In the context of the ongoing clashes between the Syrian Arab armed forces and armed members of the opposition, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) fired across the ceasefire line in what they considered to be retaliation for fire from the Bravo side that had reportedly landed in the Alpha side. On 2 and 12 April, the Liaison Officer of the Government of Israel informed UNDOF that IDF soldiers on a routine night-time patrol west of the technical fence had been fired at by individuals from the Bravo side. IDF fired two tank rounds on 2 April and two anti-tank missiles on 12 April into the area of separation in what they considered to be retaliatory fire. The Senior Syrian Arab Delegate, the main interlocutor for UNDOF on the Bravo side, informed UNDOF that one person had been killed and another had been injured in the 12 April incident. On 20 May, IDF informed UNDOF that an IDF night-time patrol along the technical fence had been hit by fire from a Syrian Arab armed forces position. UNDOF was not able to confirm the incident. On the same day, IDF informed UNDOF that it would return fire in any future incident of that



kind. UNDOF requested the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate to take all measures necessary to ensure that no further firing would occur across the ceasefire line. In the early morning hours of 21 May, Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that IDF had fired two missiles at a Syrian armed forces position in the vicinity of Bir Ajam. Subsequently, IDF informed UNDOF that they had fired two missiles at a Syrian Arab armed forces position in the vicinity of Bir Ajam in response to heavy machine gun fire from the position, which had hit, for the second time, an IDF patrol in the vicinity of Zbedah al-Gharbia in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. IDF also informed UNDOF that while there had been no injuries to IDF soldiers, an IDF vehicle had been damaged.

4. In identical letters dated 21 May addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations stated that his country had exercised its right to self-defence in response to an Israeli vehicle that had reportedly crossed the ceasefire line and the launch of two missiles by IDF from the area of Tall al-Faras (see S/2013/303). On 23 May, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed identical letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council in which he stated that, on 21 May, the Syrian Arab armed forces had opened fire on an IDF patrol on the Alpha side and that IDF, acting in self-defence, had fired back at the outpost from which the fire had originated (see S/2013/314). All firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line are violations of the Disengagement Agreement.

5. Intense clashes between the Syrian Arab armed forces and armed members of the opposition continued in Jabbata, Trunje, Ufaniyah, Al Horaye, Al Quatanyia, Jaba, Bir Ajam and Braika in the area of separation. Small arms firing from inside the area of separation and artillery, mortar, main battle tank, machine gun and anti-aircraft gun firing from the area of limitation on the Bravo side occurred on a daily basis. Clashes between the Syrian Arab armed forces and armed members of the opposition also continued in the areas of Khan Arnabeh, Al Baath and New Hamediya, mainly along the main UNDOF supply road. Intensive shelling was observed towards Bayt Jinn, with Syrian Arab armed forces troops moving into the area in pursuit of armed members of the opposition. Since the end of January, a Syrian armed forces main battle tank and an anti-aircraft gun have remained in the area of separation in the vicinity of Khan Arnabeh and at Al Qunaytirah, respectively, in violation of the Disengagement Agreement. In addition, since the end of May, three armoured personnel carriers have been stationed at the Syrian Arab armed forces checkpoint at the entrance to the area of separation.

6. In the early morning hours of 6 June, armed members of the opposition who had gathered in areas to the east of United Nations positions 60 and 60A launched an attack on the town of Al Quneitra, cutting off the main road from the town and the Bravo gate (the transit point on the Bravo side to and from the Israeli-occupied Golan, maintained by Syrian authorities) to Damascus. The Syrian Arab armed forces immediately reinforced their presence in the UNDOF area of operation. The ensuing shelling and clashes between the Syrian Arab armed forces and the armed members of the opposition engulfed the central part of the area of operation to the north and south of the main road, between Camp Ziouani on the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) and Camp Faouar on the Bravo side. UNDOF reported shelling in the vicinity of Khan Arnabeh, Al Samdaniyah and Trunje, and mortar fire in the vicinity of United Nations observation post 52, in the area of separation. Tank shells

and mortars landed in the vicinity of United Nations position 60A. As a result of the fighting, Camp Ziouani was hit by a total of 34 indirect mortars and heavy-machine gun fire. Two UNDOF military personnel at Camp Ziouani sustained minor injuries. A number of buildings in the Camp, including accommodation blocks and the logistics office, sustained light damage; communication lines were affected temporarily and subsequently restored.

7. All United Nations personnel in positions located in the affected area took shelter in their positions. UNDOF personnel at the Charlie gate (which is on the ceasefire line and is manned by UNDOF) relocated temporarily to the Alpha side. All UNDOF personnel present at Camp Ziouani took shelter at the Camp. During the clashes, armed members of the opposition took control temporarily of the Bravo gate. After several hours of clashes between the Syrian Arab armed forces and the armed members of the opposition, the former gained control of the Bravo gate. By noon on 6 June, the fighting in the area had subsided, albeit with continued sporadic shelling. On the following day, 7 June, the Alpha, Bravo and Charlie gates, which had been closed throughout the clashes, reopened.

8. During the clashes on 6 June, and following reports that tanks of the Syrian Arab armed forces were moving in the general area between Kahn Arnabeh and Al Quineitra, the UNDOF Force Commander immediately asked the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate that the tanks be withdrawn as their presence was a violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. Subsequently, IDF informed the UNDOF Force Commander that should the tanks continue to move in the vicinity of Al Quineitra or should any shelling land on the Alpha side, IDF would take action. The UNDOF Force Commander conveyed the IDF message to the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate, who took action to have the tanks withdrawn and emphasized that the presence of the tanks was solely for the purpose of fighting the armed opposition and asked that IDF not take action. Late in the day on 6 June, two armoured personnel carriers of the Syrian Arab armed forces remained at the Bravo gate, in violation of the Disengagement Agreement.

9. The Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that five Syrian Arab armed forces personnel had been killed, including two of the five unarmed Liaison Officers of the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate at the Bravo gate. A third Liaison Officer of the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate had been abducted by armed members of the opposition. The Liaison Officer of the Government of Israel informed UNDOF that IDF had provided emergency medical treatment to 20 armed members of the opposition, all of whom had been returned to the Bravo side, according to IDF.

10. Throughout the fighting, the UNDOF Force Commander remained in close contact with both sides, stressing the importance of exercising maximum restraint, in an effort to prevent an escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line and ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

11. In making its best effort to maintain the ceasefire and to see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed by the 1974 Disengagement Agreement between Israeli and Syrian forces, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line. UNDOF observed and reported instances of continued transborder movements of unidentified individuals, some of them armed, between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the northern part of the area of separation. Since 1 April, the frequency with which UNDOF observed civilians, mainly women and children, moving along the same route has increased slightly.

12. Syrian security forces maintained the checkpoints established inside the area of separation since they began military operations in the area. In addition, Syrian Arab armed forces personnel maintained checkpoints at the eastern entrances to the area of separation to control and restrict traffic. The checkpoints have often interfered with the freedom of movement of UNDOF and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) military observers operationally integrated into the Force as Observer Group Golan. Restrictions on the movement of UNDOF and the Observer Group Golan in the areas of separation and limitation increased as a result of the clashes between the Syrian armed forces and armed members of the opposition. The situation resulted in the frequent closure of the UNDOF main supply road, thus hampering the movements of UNDOF between Camp Faouar on the Bravo side and Camp Ziouani on the Alpha side. UNDOF frequently resorted to the use of bypass roads, which are not accessible at night. The Senior Syrian Arab Delegate advised UNDOF that, for security reasons, all United Nations personnel should avoid areas where there were clashes and that UNDOF should not carry out night-time patrols.

13. On occasion, during clashes between Syrian armed forces and armed members of the opposition, direct and indirect fire landed in the vicinity of United Nations installations, forcing United Nations personnel to seek shelter. On 1 April, UNDOF observed gunfire and several detonations close to United Nations position 31 and observation post 72, inside the area of separation. On 25 April and 30 May, artillery shells detonated in close proximity to United Nations position 37, while on 10 May machine-gun fire hit the outer perimeter wall of the same position. There was no injury to United Nations personnel. The detonations damaged the buildings inside the position. On two occasions, on 21 April and 5 May, shots were fired at UNDOF patrols carrying out activities in clearly marked United Nations vehicles in the vicinity of Hadar and Hanud, respectively, in the area of separation. There was no injury to United Nations personnel.

14. On 7 May, four UNDOF personnel travelling in two United Nations vehicles (near United Nations position 86) were intercepted by a large group of armed persons that identified itself as the Al Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade. The group forcibly took the UNDOF personnel to Al Jamlah village in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. Throughout the incident, the United Nations and other interlocutors used various channels to secure the release of the peacekeepers (for example, UNDOF and the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate liaised closely) and in an attempt to halt the fighting in Al Jamlah, where the peacekeepers were being held. On 12 May, the peacekeepers were released safely and in good health.

15. On the same day, after the abduction of the four peacekeepers, 10 armed persons forced a peacekeeper at the UNDOF outpost 86A sentry box at gunpoint to leave and stole a United Nations radio and binoculars. Another group of 10 armed persons approached United Nations position 86 and demanded that the remaining 8 military personnel vacate the position. The UNDOF soldiers refused and, after a prolonged stand-off, the armed group threatened to attack at night if the position was not vacated and then left. The same evening, UNDOF reinforced the United Nations position with an additional 40 personnel. All UNDOF personnel subsequently vacated the position, pushing through an attempted blockade by unidentified armed elements.

16. During the night of 15 May, a group of approximately 20 armed persons broke into the compound of United Nations observation post 52, which was manned by three Observer Group Golan military observers. Another 20 armed persons, initially

claiming to be Syrian Arab armed forces soldiers, forcibly took the three military observers to the village of Bir Ajam in the area of separation. In response to the incident, an UNDOF rapid response group from Camp Ziouani deployed to observation post 52. After about four hours, the military observers were released unharmed and returned to observation post 52. During the abduction of the peacekeepers, the armed group ransacked and looted the observation post, causing extensive damage to the facility and destroying electronic equipment.

17. In another incident involving United Nations personnel, on 19 April four UNDOF personnel travelling from Hadar to United Nations position 60 in a convoy of two vehicles were stopped by four unidentified, masked armed persons. Subsequently, the armed persons pointed their rifles at the peacekeepers and forced them to open the vehicle doors, which they had initially refused to do. One of the armed men fired two warning shots and forcibly took 1 rifle, 10 magazines and 300 rounds of ammunition from the United Nations vehicle. On 5 May, soldiers of the Syrian Arab armed forces pointed their weapons at UNDOF personnel travelling in clearly marked vehicles in the vicinity of Hanud.

18. UNDOF has protested the presence of Syrian Arab armed forces and equipment in the area of separation, the firing into and inside the area of separation, the firing at United Nations personnel and facilities and the abduction of United Nations personnel. The UNDOF Force Commander reiterated to Syrian authorities, including the Minister of Defence and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, the obligation of the Syrian Arab armed forces to halt military operations in the area of separation and cease firing from the area of limitation, stressing the importance of abiding by the terms of the Disengagement Agreement and ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground. Senior United Nations officials have conveyed similar messages to the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations.

19. The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed identical letters dated 5 May to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council claiming that Israeli aircraft had fired rockets from outside Syrian airspace at three sites belonging to the Syrian Arab armed forces in north-east Jamraya, Maysalun and the airport in the Dimas area, killing and wounding many Syrian civilians and causing widespread destruction (see S/2013/267). The Secretary-General issued a statement on the same day expressing grave concern about reports of Israeli air strikes in the Syrian Arab Republic, noting that the United Nations did not have the details of the reported incidents, nor was it in a position to verify independently what had occurred. On 8 May, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic again addressed identical letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council claiming that Israel was providing support, including medical services, to “terrorists” on the Golan in violation of the Disengagement Agreement and the Charter of the United Nations (see S/2013/273). In recent weeks, Syrian officials have made public statements supporting action against Israel on the Golan.

20. Within this challenging operational environment, UNDOF supervised the area of separation by manning static positions to ensure that the military forces of both parties were excluded from it. UNDOF, through the Observer Group Golan, continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied

Observer Group Golan inspection teams. On the Bravo side, Syrian authorities ceased the practice of providing liaison officers to accompany the Observer Group Golan inspection teams following the abduction on 30 July 2012, by unknown armed persons, of a Syrian liaison officer accompanying the military observers in the area of limitation. The deteriorating security situation on the Bravo side also resulted in the temporary suspension, since 5 March, of inspections and mobile operations in the area of limitation. As in the past, the Force faced restrictions on freedom of movement and its inspection teams were denied access to some positions on the Alpha side.

21. UNDOF continued to liaise closely with IDF and the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate to defuse tensions and keep channels of communication open in order to prevent an escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. The UNDOF Force Commander also urged IDF to exercise maximum restraint, particularly with regard to incidents in proximity to the Alpha line.

22. UNDOF continued to adapt its operational posture to the ongoing IDF training activities and new military construction in the area of limitation on the Alpha side, Syrian civilian developments in proximity to the ceasefire line in the area of separation and increased military activities from the positions of the Syrian Arab armed forces along the Bravo line. IDF continued to enhance the technical fence and established additional physical obstacles along the technical fence to prevent crossings from the area of separation. Both sides maintained their defensive positions in the respective areas of limitation. Israeli customs officials continued to operate periodically at the IDF post at the UNDOF crossing gate between the Israeli-occupied Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

23. As at 21 May, UNDOF, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, has facilitated the crossing of 11,700 tons of apples from the Alpha side to the Bravo side. UNDOF continued to provide medical treatment to civilians, including emergency medical treatment, on a strictly humanitarian basis. During the intense fighting between the Syrian Arab armed forces and armed members of the opposition in the vicinity of Al Rafid in the area of separation in March, around 3,700 civilians from the villages of Al Rafid, Al Asbah and Al Aishah sought temporary shelter outside United Nations position 80. UNDOF provided drinking water and emergency medical treatment to several injured civilians. On 5 April, the civilians returned to their villages. On 7 May, around 800 civilians sought shelter once again outside the same position owing to clashes near Al Rafid village. The civilians moved away from the vicinity of position 80 on the same day.

24. In the area of operation, especially in the vicinity of the Alpha line in the area of separation, mines continued to pose a threat to UNDOF personnel and local inhabitants. Owing to the long-term presence of the mines and the deterioration of their detonation systems, the threat has increased. With enhanced mine clearing and detection capacity, UNDOF continued to carry out operational mine clearance.

25. Despite the limitations posed by the security situation on the Bravo side, UNDOF continued its efforts to liaise with local authorities and engage with the local population to explain the mission's mandate and activities. This was also important in the light of the security situation in the UNDOF area of operation, and as part of the effort to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground.

26. As at 25 May, UNDOF comprised 911 troops from Austria (377), the Philippines (341) and India (193). On 18 March, Croatia withdrew its contingent of 97 military personnel from UNDOF. The Government of Fiji agreed to contribute a contingent of 171 military personnel to replace the Croatian and Japanese contingents. From 14 to 21 May, a three-member team from Fiji visited UNDOF in preparation for the deployment of the contingent, scheduled for June. Further to the recommendations arising from the study of the military capability of UNDOF that was conducted in January 2013, the position of Deputy Force Commander was established in the mission. On 15 April, the new Deputy Force Commander, from Austria, assumed his position in UNDOF. On 6 June, the Government of Austria announced its decision to withdraw its contingent from UNDOF. The withdrawal of Austria, a long-standing troop-contributing country to UNDOF, will significantly affect the efforts of UNDOF to continue to implement its mandate. In this regard, the United Nations is approaching countries that are currently contributing troops to UNDOF and other Member States in an effort to identify urgently additional contributions from the former and new contributors to UNDOF among the latter. In addition, 80 military observers from UNTSO assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks.

27. Further to the request made by the Security Council in its resolution 2084 (2012), efforts continue to be made to ensure that the Force has the capacity necessary to fulfil its mandate in a safe and secure way. Most of the recommendations arising from the military capability study have been implemented. UNDOF continues to adopt and update mitigation measures in response to new threats in its operational environment. The mission maintained efforts to ensure the necessary strategic reserve and the Force's self-sustainment capability. In addition, UNDOF continued to implement the rehabilitation programme to maintain and upgrade its equipment and infrastructure, in an effort to maintain its operational and security capacity. Additional armoured vehicles were deployed to UNDOF with a view to enhancing force protection. All UNDOF personnel were equipped with personal protection kits and were provided with the appropriate training. The security situation made it necessary for UNDOF to consider, with the cooperation of relevant authorities, the use of alternative ports of entry and departure for mission personnel, including staff officers and contingent members.

28. Given the evolving security situation in the UNDOF area of operation, the mission continued to temporarily reconfigure its operations with a view to ensuring its continued ability to implement its mandate in a safe and secure manner. As such, UNDOF has continued to concentrate on static activities in an effort to reduce the exposure of personnel to danger, while focusing on enhancing situational analysis, reporting and liaising with the parties to prevent the situation from escalating. UNDOF mobile operations on the Bravo side remain temporarily suspended. These operational adjustments have involved a temporary shift in the focus of the activities of a number of Observer Group Golan military observers, from patrolling and inspection to static observation, liaison and situation analysis. In addition, military staff officers from the Secretariat were deployed temporarily to UNDOF for six weeks to fill capacity gaps within the UNDOF operations section. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is looking into ways of enhancing the self-defence capabilities of UNDOF, including by increasing the troop strength to about 1,250, within the parameters set forth in the Protocol to the Disengagement Agreement. The mission continues its efforts to ensure the necessary strategic reserve and the Force's self-sustainment capacity. In addition, UNDOF is putting in place risk

mitigation measures on the basis of a comprehensive risk assessment carried out by the mission with the support of the Secretariat. These measures include the reinforcement of observation posts manned by Observer Group Golan observers in isolated locations and regular rehearsals of evacuation operations. The mission reviews its contingency planning on an ongoing basis, taking into account the evolving situation in the area of operation.

29. Continuous efforts have been made to enhance the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Since 1 March, the UNDOF security section has been strengthened by an additional two security officers temporarily assigned to the mission. UNDOF has faced road closures and restrictions affecting movement in the area of operation and between the area of operation and Damascus on a recurring basis. A number of UNDOF national staff work from home as they are not able to report for work on a regular basis owing to the security situation and some administrative and security staff have been accommodated in converted offices in the representational office in Damascus. The offices of some international staff have been relocated from Camp Faouar to Camp Ziouani on the Alpha side.

III. Financial aspects

30. By its resolution 66/276, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of \$46.0 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. The financing arrangements for UNDOF for the same period and the related proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 are currently under consideration by the Assembly during the second part of its resumed sixty-seventh session. Should the Security Council approve the recommendation set out in paragraph 38 below with respect to the extension of the mandate of UNDOF, the cost for the maintenance of the Force during the extension period will be limited to resources approved by the Assembly.

31. As at 29 May 2013, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNDOF Special Account amounted to \$18.5 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to \$1,381.4 million.

32. As at 29 May 2013, amounts owed to contributors for troop costs totalled \$2.1 million. Reimbursements for troop costs and for equipment and self-sustainment have been made for the period up to 28 February 2013 and 31 December 2012, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

IV. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

33. The Security Council, when deciding in its resolution 2084 (2012) to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 30 June 2013, also called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973) and requested the Secretary-General to submit, at the end of the period, a report on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement that resolution. The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts undertaken at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was dealt with in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/67/342) submitted pursuant

to General Assembly resolutions 66/18, entitled “Jerusalem”, and 66/19, entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

34. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties, and the Syrian crisis currently impedes prospects of their resumption and progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the crisis and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions adopted by the Council.

V. Observations

35. I remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its impact on the Syrian population and its potential implications for the stability of the region. The situation has affected the UNDOF area of operation significantly. The ongoing military activities in the area of separation continue to have the potential to escalate tensions between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and to jeopardize the ceasefire between the two countries.

36. The developments in the UNDOF area of operation, including the intense clashes that occurred on 6 June in the area of separation, show the volatility of the situation on the Golan. I reiterate that all military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the long-held ceasefire and the local civilian population, as well as United Nations personnel on the ground. They undermine the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israeli and Syrian forces and the efforts of UNDOF to implement the mandate, and will continue to be reported as such. I call on all parties to the Syrian domestic conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operation. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF.

37. The presence of the Syrian Arab armed forces and unauthorized military equipment in the area of separation is a grave violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. The IDF retaliatory fire across the ceasefire line too is a serious violation of the Agreement. Any Israeli military action inside the Syrian Arab Republic puts the ceasefire at risk. I call upon Israel to exercise maximum restraint to prevent an escalation of the situation. The commitment to the Agreement must be upheld by both parties in order to maintain the calm and stability on the Golan. The threats of acting against Israel on the Golan made by Syrian leaders undermine the Agreement. In addition, I trust that both sides will take all necessary measures to protect civilians and ensure respect for the safety and security of UNDOF personnel, as well as freedom of movement for the Force throughout its area of operation. For its part, the United Nations will spare no effort in ensuring that the long-held ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to hold.

38. I also remain deeply concerned by the incidents involving United Nations personnel on the ground. The mandate of UNDOF remains an important element in ensuring the stability of the region. It must be recalled that UNDOF was established by the Security Council with the agreement of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, and that its mandate was prescribed by the Disengagement Agreement and its Protocol. UNDOF is mandated to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian

Arab Republic, to see that it is scrupulously observed and to supervise the Agreement and the Protocol thereto with regard to the areas of separation and limitation.

39. Any hostile act against United Nations personnel on the ground, such as the recent abduction of four UNDOF personnel and three Observer Group Golan military observers, the direct and indirect firing at them by the Syrian Arab armed forces or armed members of the opposition, the theft of United Nations weapons and ammunition, vehicles and other assets, and the looting and destruction of United Nations facilities, are unacceptable. The safety and security of UNDOF personnel and Observer Group Golan military observers remains essential for enabling UNDOF to continue to implement its mandate under these difficult conditions.

40. The primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side rests with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, and I again call on that Government to facilitate fully the efforts of the mission to continue implementing its mandate safely and securely. It is imperative that respect for the privileges and immunities of UNDOF and its freedom of movement be ensured. The ability of UNDOF to engage with the local population in its area of operation in order to inform the people of its mandate and activities is limited owing to the prevailing security situation. Armed members of the opposition operating in the UNDOF area of operation must be clearly apprised of the mandate of the mission and must immediately cease any actions that jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground. It remains critical that countries with influence strongly convey to the armed opposition groups in the UNDOF area of operation the need to halt all activities that endanger United Nations peacekeepers on the ground and to accord United Nations personnel the freedom to carry out their mandate safely and securely.

41. It is equally critical that the Security Council continue to bring its influence to bear on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate freely and securely within its area of operation and to carry out its important mandate. It is essential that UNDOF continue to have at its disposal all the means and resources it needs to carry out its mandate safely and securely. It is vital that UNDOF retain the confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries. The continued credible presence of UNDOF remains an important element in ensuring stability on the Golan and in the region. I regret the decision of the Government of Austria to withdraw from UNDOF, after what has been a long-standing and valuable contribution to the Force. Efforts are under way to identify urgently additional contributions and new contributors to UNDOF, in the light of the pending withdrawal of Austrian troops from UNDOF and to ensure that the withdrawal is conducted in an orderly fashion. I appeal to Member States to contribute troops to UNDOF to support United Nations efforts to enhance the capabilities of the Force.

42. Given the evolving security situation in the UNDOF area of operation, it is also necessary to consider further adjustments to the posture and operations of the mission, as well as additional mitigation measures. These include, as a matter of priority, enhancing the self-defence capabilities of UNDOF, including increasing the Force strength to about 1,250 and improving its self-defence equipment, within the parameters set forth in the Protocol to the Disengagement Agreement. In addition, UNDOF continuously reviews and updates its contingency plans. The support of the parties and the Security Council is critical as UNDOF continues to make these critical adjustments.

43. The current security situation has continued to disrupt UNDOF support and logistical activities on an almost daily basis, thus complicating significantly the ability of the mission to carry out its mandated tasks effectively. It is essential that the parties provide all the necessary support to ensure appropriate conditions for United Nations personnel on the ground and cooperate fully in facilitating the support and logistical activities of the mission.

44. Under the prevailing circumstances, I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2013. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel too has expressed its agreement.

45. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Iqbal Singh Singha, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership. These women and men continue to perform with efficiency and commitment and under challenging circumstances the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council. I have full confidence that UNDOF will continue to make its best effort to carry out its mission. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Governments contributing troops to UNDOF and to those providing the UNTSO military observers assigned to the Force.
